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REVIEWS.

A History of English Literature, by William Vaughn Moody and Robert Morss Lovett, Assistant Professors of English in the University of Chicago. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902. Pp. vi and 433.

A First View of English Literature, by William Vaughn Moody and Robert Morss Lovett. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905. Pp. vi and 386.

A Student's History of English Literature, by William Edward Simonds, Professor of English Literature in Knox College. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1902. Pp. v and 483.

American Literature, by Julian W. Abernethy, Principal of the Berkeley Institute, Brooklyn. New York: Maynard, Merrill and Company, 1902. Pp. 4 and 510.

American Literature, by Alphonso G. Newcomer, Associate Professor of English in the Leland Stanford Junior University. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1901. Pp. 7 and 364.

A Manual of American Literature, by James B. Smiley, Assistant Principal of Lincoln High School, Cleveland, Ohio. New York: American Book Company, 1905. Pp. 4 and 336.

During the last few years, several school histories of English and of American literature have been added to an array already imposing. Two of these are from the pens of the same authors, Professors Moody and Lovett of the University of Chicago. Their first volume, *A History of English Literature* appeared in 1902, and

was followed three years later by the second, *A First View of English Literature*. The authors evidently expected that the earlier volume would satisfy the needs both of high school and of college students, for in the *Preface* they expressed themselves as follows: 'An attempt has here been made to present the history of English literature from the earliest times to our own day, in a historical scheme simple enough to be apprehended by young students, yet accurate and substantial enough to serve as a permanent basis for study, however far the study is pursued.'

Experience demonstrated, however, that the book was too difficult for high school use, and the result was the preparation of the second volume, a modification of the first.

It is gratifying to observe that the need of different histories of literature for high school and for college has at last been frankly recognized by a publishing house. Most of our histories, in attempting to meet the demands of both classes of students, fail to satisfy those of either. How could it be otherwise, with such a difference in the maturity of the students?

The college student should be furnished a text that will treat the literature as an organism, and show its evolution as subjected to forces from within and without : a treatment genetic and cumulative. He is ready to be taught, for example, that the 'terms mediævalism and Renaissance do not stand so much for two periods of history as for two tendencies, two hostile forces, which in half-hearted truce or open warfare have always co-existed, and must always co-exist, in the heart of man, and consequently in his literature and art,' and to be guided in the interpretation of these tendencies as they ebb and flow, and act and react upon one another through all the extent of our literature. If the student does not appreciate that Vaughn is nearer to Ælfric and Cynewulf than is Chaucer, and that Chaucer is as near to Shakespeare as is Spenser, he is not mastering his subject. Again, the criticism should be mature, vigorous and acute, and stimulate the students' best powers of perception and discrimination. Furthermore, while the emphasis should be placed upon the philosophy of literature and upon criticism, the college student may reasonably be asked to acquire those many facts of literary record with which every cultured man should be conversant.

On the other hand, the history of literature prepared for high school use should be much more elementary. Above all, it should

be rigidly schematic: the broad general characteristics of each period should be carefully stated, and the successive authors of the period be constantly referred back to them. Each author should be made to appear interesting as a man, in order to insure a later derived interest in his writings. Criticism, while of course discriminating, should be simple, avoiding subtle analysis and fine distinctions.

If then the fundamental requirement of a college text be a masterly exposition of the genesis of the literature and of its growth as affected by influences external and internal, showing how each individual author is affected by the ideals of his age, and how he in turn modifies those ideals, Professors Moody and Lovett's more advanced book is by no means adequate. The criticism of individuals as individuals is invariably discriminating and satisfying, but there is no vigorous exposition of the forces at work influencing a whole school of writers. For example, the chapter on *The Reign of Classicism* does not even define *classicism*, much less analyze it, explain why English Literature had a classical period, or demonstrate the extent to which the ideals of classicism affected Swift, Steele, and Addison, and to which they modified those ideals. Would it not have been more scholarly, as prefatory to discussing Addison's mission or Swift's satire to explain why didacticism and satire are inherent in classicism?

This weakness in interpreting the *time-spirit* is the weakness of the whole book. Its strength is its criticism, which, though subjective, is sensitive and vigorous, and at times brilliant. The discussion of *Hamlet* closes with the following keen interpretation: 'It is one of the ironies of circumstance that Hamlet has come to stand in most minds for a type of irresolution. This misunderstanding of the character is largely due to the exaltation of excitement in Hamlet, which causes his mind, even in the moment when he is pursuing his purpose with most intentness, to play with feverish brilliancy over the questions of man's life and death; which makes his throbbing, white-hot imagination a meeting-place for grotesque and extravagant fancies; and which leads him, so to speak, to cover the solid framework of his enterprise with a wild festoonery of intellectual whim, to envelop it in fitful eloquence, swift and subtle wit, contemptuous irony, and mordant satire. Yet this is merely the by-play of his mind, the volatilized substance which escapes under

the heat of excitement. In the midst of it he remains perfectly master of himself and of his means, a supremely rational, competent, and determined being, a prince and master of men, dedicated irrevocably to ruin in the moral chaos where the "cursed spite" of his destiny has thrown him. With a miraculous art, Shakespeare has depicted this character, not fixed in outline, but changing and palpitant as life itself ; so that it constantly eludes our definition, and seems forever passing from one state of being into another, in the passion of its struggle.'

The *First View of English Literature* is in many respects an admirable text-book. Though only one sixth of the volume is devoted to the Old and Middle English Literature—for the modern literature is rightly regarded as having more interest for immature students,—this is presented in a manner that can hardly fail to attract boys and girls. The authors have first given lively and enthusiastic pictures of the life of the times, and have then shown how this life is reflected, sometimes ideally, sometimes realistically, in the contemporary writing. To this end, such poems as the *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight* are reproduced at length, and over all is thrown the fascination of romance. I know of no other school history that has treated the early literature so well ; most histories offering a profitless chronicle that quite confuses and discourages the novice.

The chapters on the modern literature cannot be praised so highly. The authors have wisely disregarded the minor writers, and they have shown a good deal of skill in getting a hearing for the men whom they discuss. Yet this advantage is more or less annulled by the criticism, much of which is beyond high school pupils, for though the authors have tried to be simple, they do not appreciate the limitations of immature youth. What does such a passage as the following mean to a high school lad? 'In 1642 appeared his first work, *Religio Medici*, a confession of his own personal religious creed. It is in essence a mystical acceptance of Christianity. "Methinks," he says, "there be not impossibilities enough in religion for active faith . . . I love to lose myself in a mystery ; to pursue my reason to an *O Altitudo*." This sense of solemn exaltation, this losing of himself in a mystery, is Browne's characteristic mood.'

The book might be curtailed to advantage. Thus, the historical introductions to the chapters are meaningless to a pupil who has not studied English History, and for one who has studied it a few allusions would suffice. Again, some authors are discussed in greater detail than their place in the high school curriculum requires or warrants. The pages on Browning illustrate this.

Finally, the volume is not sufficiently schematic, and cannot leave in the pupil's mind the definite impressions that should be left. In this respect it is much inferior to the earlier history written by Halleck.

Professor Simond's history is uneven ; at times the author goes very fully into details, and again he neglects matters of importance. He lacks a fine sense of what is pertinent, and, which is a corollary of the latter, lacks synthesis.

The details are usually of a biographical nature. Now acquaintance with the life of an author undoubtedly quickens our appreciation of his work, but what end is served by a biographical digest crowded into a few lines, or, at the most, into a paragraph ? To take an illustration, the group of metaphysical poets is introduced as follows : 'A peculiar phase of the poetical art is found in the compositions of a little group of versifiers who are frequently described as the *metaphysical poets*.' Then follow two pages devoted to Donne, Herbert, Quarles, Crashaw, and Vaughn. We are informed that Herbert was born in Wales, took his university course at Trinity College, Cambridge, and in 1630 became Vicar of Bremerton, near Salisbury ; that Quarles studied at Christ's (Milton's) College, and was later secretary to Archbishop Usher, that Crashaw was educated at the Charterhouse School and at Cambridge, and that Vaughn was a Welsh physician. Unquestionably this is the truth, but would it not have been better to define metaphysical, and to explain the genesis of such poetry, rather than to confront the student with this discouraging array of profitless biography ? Biographical brevities will be forgotten as quickly as read, but if the student is led to see in our literature a living thing, which like man's life, is subject to growth and decay, and if he comes to appreciate the causes which produced the wild freedom of its childhood, the daring and supple strength of its youth, and the penetration and sincerity of its cultured maturity, he has incorporated something vital into his life.

Again, some literary movements of importance are altogether ignored in this history. Thus, there is not only no attempt to trace the growth of lyrical poetry in England, but one could not gain from the book even a crude notion of the extent and nature of the English lyric. Not only does the author pass in silence the mediæval lyrics, the sweet hymns to the Virgin and Christ, and the gay songs of spring and country life that were on the lips of the English folk for centuries, but he even neglects the Elizabethan song-lyric, the most exquisite lyrical expression in any modern literature. There is the same neglect of the court-lyric, and this is the more surprising as, from his previous work in this field, one would expect Professor Simonds to be enthusiastic over this interesting and important chapter in the history of our poetry. But after the discussion of Wyatt and Surrey, the court lyric is dropped, save for bare mention of the *Astrophel and Stella*, the *Amoretti*, and the sonnets of Shakespeare. The lyrics of the Fletchers, Daniel, Lodge, Constable, and William of Hawthornden receive no attention.

In justification of the charge that this book lacks a fine sense of what is pertinent, let us compare its discussion of the *Arcadia* with that in Moody and Lovett's longer history. This is a detail to be sure, but I think it may be called representative of the treatment as a whole. Professor Simonds says : ' Besides this group of passionate love sonnets, Sir Philip Sidney left an elaborate pastoral romance entitled *Arcadia*. This voluminous work, which may be taken as typical of numerous efforts in the field of prose fiction belonging to this time, was never designed for publication. In the year 1580 Sidney had begun its composition solely for the diversion of his sister, the Countess, charging her to destroy the manuscript as it was read : but four years after Sidney's death *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* was published at London. It became the most popular romance of the day, inspiring many imitators, and, like Lyly's *Euphues*, even setting a model of conversational form among the ladies and gentlemen of Elizabeth's court.' In the other history, the *Arcadia* is treated as follows :

' Sidney's chief literary adventure was the *Arcadia*, which he began in 1580, when, in consequence of a quarrel with the Earl of Oxford, he was in temporary disgrace and banishment from court. The writing of the *Arcadia* was merely a summer pastime, undertaken to please the Countess of Pembroke, Sidney's sister. The

form of the work was suggested by romances, popular in Italy and in Spain, in which the scenes are laid in a pastoral country like the ancient Arcadia. The prose tale is interrupted at intervals by passages of verse, or eclogues, in which the shepherds sing of love and the delights of rural life. This form of literature had an immense charm for countries which were becoming a little weary of the activity of the early Renaissance ; and Sidney himself, in his banishment from court, doubtless felt the influence of this mood. It was, however, a passing one, for Sidney was essentially a man of action ; and his story, which begins in thoroughly pastoral fashion, quickly changes to a kind of romance of chivalry set in an arcadian landscape.

‘In his attempt at enrichment of style, Sidney worked as consciously as Lyly. He frequently uses the antithesis and other mechanical devices, but his chief resource is in prodigality of ornament and elaboration of figure. For example, one character is besought “to keep her speech for awhile within the paradise of her mind.” Others are said to be “getting the pure silver of their bodies out of the ore of their garments.” This boldness of metaphor is characteristic of the spirit of the book. Sidney spins his tale with a pure love for it, with the enthusiasm that he might have thrown into a buccaneering expedition to the Indies, if fortune had been kind to him ; and this is the real source of such pleasure as we feel to-day in reading the *Arcadia*. His delight in his work is perfect, and gives to the book its exuberance, its fulness, its color. His style is whimsical and moody, epigrammatic and exhaustive by turns ; now conscientious and dull, again full of the daring and passion of poetry.’ It is not hard to tell which of these accounts would attract and arouse it.

The style of the author leaves much to be desired, for though the expression is sometimes lucid and graceful, it is often monotonous or clumsy. Thus, on pages 23–25 is a long paragraph composed entirely of short, declarative sentences, often not more than fifteen words in length, and the effect is choppy and metallic. The following sentence from page nineteen not only is cacophonous, but demands a second reading to be understood : ‘Communities of devotees, where both men and women piously inclined gathered for religious fellowship and a consecrated life, were established, and in time became seats of learning as well as centres of religious zeal.’

If the above criticisms are just, this is not a book to be put into the hands of college students. It has not a fine sense of relative values, it is not synthetic and comprehensive, and though it deals much in details, the details are not significant. Nor is this a book for high schools. Its minutiae would discourage the pupils, and throw them out of sympathy with the subject.

Dr. Abernethy's history is hardly worthy of extended criticism, for it violates the canons both of taste and of scholarship. The author has no discriminating and well-defined standards of judgment, and therefore his criticism is not just and measured. His writing lacks discernment and insight, and is grossly exaggerated: the blackbirds and ground sparrows are all larks. A few sentences from the pages on Lowell—because of his unevenness an excellent author by whom to test the critical faculty—will illustrate the provincialism, immoderateness and rhetorical crudeness of this book. 'From a campaign song in dialect to a learned essay on Dante, an elegant exchange of compliments with royalty, or a poem expressing the profoundest experiences of the soul, he could pass with equal and masterly ease Quite as characteristic, however, as his wit and humor, is the background or contrast of serious thought. His fancy plays upon the surface of deep waters. Both verse and prose are heavily freighted with the rich stores of scholarship and thinking, and for this reason Lowell can never be popular in the sense in which Irving and Longfellow are popular The amplitude of learning is sometimes bewildering, and the rapid prismatic flashings of new thoughts are followed with a kind of breathless despair. The richness of expression is often an embarrassment, it is so prodigal and profuse; the sentences are packed with meaning, the humor evasive, the language learned, the allusions bookish and remote. Yet there is no pedantry. He scatters wise and witty epigrams up and down his pages, like one who sows from the sack instead of from the hand; his style is diffusive, uneven, at times running to waywardness and caprice. But objections have little force in the presence of such scholarly ease, and such a gracious and winning personality. He merely exercises the right of genius to be natural, without regard for the law.'

In gratifying contrast is Professor Newcomer's history, a volume which is the product of exact scholarship, catholic sympathy regu-

lated and tempered by refined taste, and a nice appreciation of the province of an elementary history of literature.

Three 'large and well-defined periods' are recognized: I. *The Beginnings*, extending from the founding of the colony at Jamestown in 1607 down to about 1800; II. *The Creative Impulse*, extending from the first decade of the nineteenth century to the civil war; III. *The Period of Later Activity*, extending from the civil war to the present time. The author justifies this simplicity of grouping on the ground that 'there can be no elaborate time-division of a literature that has but one era of high accomplishment.' The sub-divisions are correspondingly reasonable: thus, Part II. is divided into chapters on *The New Environment*, *Romance*, *The Transcendental Movement*, and *National Life and Culture*. Professor Newcomer has wisely avoided the temptation to recognize a large number of schools in the mid-century period, appreciating that to classify the authors as Cambridge scholars, anti-slavery agitators, and the like, is to work confusion. He is content to show how such varied personalities as Webster, Clay, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell, Julia Ward Howe, Warner and Whitman were 'co-workers toward the one end of upbuilding a modern nation of political unity and of continuous moral and intellectual growth.' Having no uncertain categories to defend, the relation of each one of these authors to the national life can be carefully traced.

The criticism is in all respects admirable, and shows a keenness of insight and a resourcefulness and flexibility of definition unequalled in any history of American literature, not excepting certain more pretentious works. The following passages are selected from the pages on Lowell, and offer interesting comparison with the criticism quoted above. 'Mr. Stedman has somewhere said, speaking of poetry, that "Lowell has sprinkled the whole subject with diamond dust." So he has sprinkled everything: to be spendthrift is his function. But while we envy him his brilliant gifts we cannot help wishing that he had learned and exercised greater restraint, or that he had cultivated more sedulously certain finer qualities. Now and then he curbs his high spirits and tempers his exuberance with a quiet, pensive strain. But in general the temptations to adornment and to mirth are too strong for him. The result shows in that want of fine texture and harmonious tone for which his work is often criticised. Nothing, for example, could well be better than the

first paragraph of the essay *On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners*; and, so far as a sense for harmony of style is concerned, few things could be worse than the fourteenth paragraph of the same essay. The balances of dignity, refinement, grace, pathos, and all the qualities that make for beauty and elevation, are too often wanting. In these things the great English humorists of his century, Lamb and De Quincey, are both his superiors.

‘Somewhat similar defects attach to the substance of his essays. The discursive essays, those that pretend to little beyond entertainment, make some of the most delightful reading in modern letters. It is impossible to resist their varied charms, all going back to the author’s magnetic personality. And much the same is true of the more serious essays. But these latter suffer in their lack of centrality, of a guiding principle and a definite purpose Only perhaps, in one or two addresses of his last years, like *Democracy*, is it possible to discern behind the written or spoken utterance the kind of consecration that has lifted into such clear light the names of Carlyle, Emerson, Ruskin, and Arnold. His criticism at its best is constantly in danger of degenerating into witticism; at its worst it is unsympathetic and unsound, as when it confronts certain pet aversions like Petrarch, Swinburne, or Thoreau.

If we will accept him for what he is, a kind of eighteenth century critic fortified with nineteenth century learning, browsing in the fields of literature when and where he pleases, resolved to like with a zest and to dislike with a zest, and even to trample under foot what is not to his taste, we shall get our profit from him.’

Mr. Smiley’s manual is an indifferent piece of work. Each author is accorded an execrable wood-cut; a chronological table; a brief narrative; an ‘estimate,’ usually borrowed; and a short bibliography. One may well ask what possible use it can serve. It is a *manual* only in the sense of being a hand-made rather than a brain-made product.

FREDERICK MORGAN PADELFORD.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON.